



TEXAS
Gulf Coast
Press Association
Better Newspaper Contest

DEADLINE TO ENTER THE CONTEST IS MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2026

ENTRY RULES

- Open to all TGCPA member newspapers whose dues are paid in 2026. (If dues are not current, please send them to: TGCPA, c/o Nonnie Barton, 1027 Cleistes Ln, Richmond, TX 77469-2010 or enclose with the contest entries payment.)
- Dues are \$85 per year.
- Each entrant newspaper must hold a valid periodical class permit with the U.S. Postal Service.
- Entries must have been published during 2025.

ONLINE SUBMISSION OF ENTRIES

- Entries will be submitted to an online platform. For registration and uploading instructions, please visit:

www.newspapercontest.com/gulfcoast
Association code is: GULFCOAST

- If you have questions or need assistance, please email gulfcoast@newspapercontest.com or ashley@polkcountypublishing.com
- or call TGCPA contest chair Ashley Keenan at 936-204-6843 (cell) or Melanie Berger at 979-505-2310 (cell).
- Contest entries may be submitted beginning Monday, Jan. 5, 2026. The deadline is Monday, Feb. 9, 2026 at midnight.
- Entries should be submitted online and marked in red when rules specify. Entries must be the work of paid staff members.

ENTRY FEES

- After submitting the contest entries online at www.newspapercontest.com/gulfcoast please click on "Entry Billing" to see a summary of contest entries uploaded and the total entry fees to pay.
- Please mail a check payable to the Texas Gulf Coast Press Association, for the contest entry fees to:

TGCPA Contest
c/o Tyler County Booster
P.O. Box 339
Woodville, TX 75979

DIVISIONS

Division 1 – Small weeklies (1,800 or below circulation)
Division 2 – Large weeklies (1,801 and above circulation)

A semi-weekly is defined as the same paper published twice a week.
Twin-weeklies published on different days of the week under different names, but for the same community, MUST each be entered separately in the semi-weekly division. Failure to adhere to the rules will result in disqualification.
A division is valid as long as at least one completed entry is received in the category. Division status (circulation frequency) is based on the 2025 published Postal Form 3526 filed with TPA.

AWARDS PRESENTATION

The awards presentation will be held on Saturday, April 18, 2026. Plaques will be presented for first places and certificates will be awarded for second place, third place and honorable mention.

2026 TGCPA Convention

April 16-18, 2026

Hampton Inn & Suites

1788 TX-35

Port Lavaca, TX 77979

Details on registration for the combined STPA and TGCPA Convention are included with this packet.

TGCPA 2026 Better Newspaper Contest Categories

All entries must have been published during 2025

SPECIAL SECTION: Submit ONE PDF sample of your best special section. Mark out advertising and editorial copy not produced by paid newspaper staff. Entries created by a central office must be submitted in the highest circulation category. Judging will be based on creativity, layout, quality of photos and copy, benefiting target audience.

GENERAL EXCELLENCE: Submit TWO CONSECUTIVE issues published anytime during the contest year. Include combined PDFs of the entire issues (without inserts). Each individual newspaper must be a separate entry, even if several newspapers are published by the same company. Overall appearance, quality of local copy and pictures will be judged. Special editions are NOT eligible.

Email a PDF of the front page of one of the issues entered in General Excellence to ashley@polkcountypublishing.com before the deadline.

EDITORIAL WRITING: Submit TWO staff-written editorials clearly marked on a PDF of a full newspaper page either by outlining in red or with headline. Include the name of the writer. Include any jumps in the entry, on a separate page in the same PDF file, also marked. Writer(s) must be paid employee(s) of the newspaper.

SERIOUS COLUMNS: Submit TWO columns clearly marked on a PDF of a full newspaper page either by outlining in red or with headline (include jump on separate page in same PDF file). The columns must be by the same columnist on "serious" subject matters. Columnist must be a staff member and columns must be published on a regular basis. Syndicated columnists will NOT be allowed to enter.

HUMOROUS COLUMNS: Submit TWO columns clearly marked on a PDF of a full newspaper page either by outlining in red or with headline (include jump on separate page in same PDF file). The columns must be by the same columnist on "humorous" subject matters. Columnist must be a staff member and columns must be published on a regular basis. Syndicated columnists will NOT be allowed to enter.

NEWS PHOTOS: Submit TWO news photographs clearly marked in red on a PDF of a full newspaper page. The news photographs must be taken by paid staff member(s) of the newspaper. Do not include feature or sports photographs. Photos will be judged on impact, display and quality of reproduction.

FEATURE PHOTOS: Submit TWO feature photographs clearly marked in red on a PDF of a full newspaper page. The feature photographs must be taken by paid staff member(s) of the newspaper. Do not include sports photographs. Photos will be judged on impact, display and quality of reproduction.

SPORTS PHOTOS: Submit TWO sports photographs clearly marked on a PDF of a full newspaper page by outlining in red. The sports photographs must be taken by paid staff member(s) of the newspaper. Do not include feature photographs. Photos will be judged on impact, display and quality of reproduction.

SPORTS COVERAGE: Submit sports pages/sections from TWO separate issues. Present material from each issue in a combined PDF format of full newspaper pages (one PDF per issue). Include additional pages if stories jump to other pages. Staff written stories, graphics and photography will be the focal point of judging. Mark out (in red) all non-staff written stories and photos.

HEADLINE WRITING: Submit TWO headlines (sports, features, articles, columns, cutlines, etc.) clearly marked in red, so they may be easily identified, on a PDF of a full newspaper page.

FEATURE WRITING: Submit TWO feature stories clearly marked in red on a PDF of a full newspaper page. The feature stories must be written by paid staff member(s). Include feature story jumps. Entries may include sports features.

NEWS WRITING: Submit TWO news stories clearly marked in red on a PDF of a full newspaper page. The news articles must be written by paid staff member(s). Include article jumps. Impact, interest and clarity of writing style are considered in judging.

DISPLAY ADVERTISING: Submit THREE ads clearly marked by outlining in red on a PDF of a full newspaper page. The ads must be created in-house

(by paid staff members or group production department) for the newspaper. If any ad runs in more than one newspaper, only one newspaper may submit that ad. Entries created by a central office must be submitted in the highest circulation category. Judging will be on copy, illustrations, use of color (if used) and overall design and impact.

BEST NEWSLETTER:

Note: This category will not count towards sweepstakes points.
Submit TWO newsletters in a PDF.

The newsletters must be created by paid staff member(s).
Judging will be based on content and page design.

*Minimum of 3 entries: If fewer than 3 entries are received in either the small weekly division or large weekly division, the entries in those two divisions will be combined for one weekly division.

**If fewer than 3 entries are received, entries will not be judged.

FARRIS BLOCK MEMORIAL COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD: Any community service effort of the newspaper relating to one specific subject may be entered. Present material in a combined PDF format clearly marked in red. Include news articles, editorials, photos, columns, letters to the editor and other subject matter pertinent to the newspaper's support of ONE PROJECT. May include interpretation of local government reform, promotion of worthwhile community project, etc. A cover letter should be included stating the purpose of the series or special effort and whether the goal or purpose was accomplished. Note: News coverage of an event AFTER it occurs, such as floods, storms, etc. should be entered in the News Writing category, not Community Service. Reporting on efforts to prevent or alleviate the seriousness of such events in the future may be submitted as Community Service.

This category will not count towards sweepstakes points.

JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR: The "Journalist of the Year" award will recognize ONE individual out of all (not each) divisions who excels in their field. To nominate a candidate, submit five original pieces written by the same journalist for the same newspaper. Judges will evaluate a writer's skill, creativity and diversity. Entries should represent those qualities through selections of news stories, features, sports, columns, editorials or other article styles. The five articles should be submitted as PDFs of full-page tearsheets (including any related jumps). Include name of writer. Newspapers are limited to one nominee and wins in this category will not count toward aggregate sweepstakes points. There will be only one overall winner.

PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR: The "Photographer of the Year" award will recognize ONE individual out of all (not each) divisions who excels in their field. Judges will evaluate candidates for their abilities to produce photographs (either in color or black and white) that are well framed/cropped and technically accurate, convey and creativity—such as an obvious willingness to go above and beyond to get an unusual angle. To enter, submit six photos (which consists of two from sports, spot news and feature or stand-alone images). Include name of the photographer. Newspapers are limited to one nominee and wins in this category will not count toward aggregate sweepstakes points. There will be one overall winner

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SCORING SYSTEM: Best all-around in each division is based on the following scoring system: First Place, 100 points; Second Place, 50 points; Third Place, 25 points; Honorable Mention, 10 points. Only one honorable mention per category will be given. Community Service will not count toward the final tally for best all-around.

If you have any questions or need more information, call Second Vice President/Contest Chair Ashley Keenan at 936-204-6843 (cell) or email ashley@polkcountypublishing.com before deciding to do something not specifically mentioned in these rules.

**Remember – Submit all contest entries online at
www.newspapercontest.com/gulfcoast
before the deadline on Monday, Feb. 9, 2026!**